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Let's Talk Extension Nutrition



With Evelyn L. Blanchard, Nutrition Specialist

HOW DOES YOUR 4-H FOODS AND NUTRITION PROGRAM RATE

These questions have been prepared in response to numerous requests of specialists and 4-H Club agents who would like help in developing stronger 4-H foods program.

The extension nutritionists who prepared the program for the pre-convention meeting of the American Home Economics Association last June recognized this need. They asked a committee of persons outside of Extension to rate some of the bulletins. The committee rated them on the basis of a score card designed for commercial material to be used in educational work. This was a beginning but we felt that more consideration should be given as to how the bulletins were used in the 4-H program.

Many of the bulletins have been judged for readability. This is important and the readability has improved markedly in the past few years. However, there is a need to keep the subject matter up to date, to keep the program to the age, ability and interests of the members, and to be sure the program really fits the foods patterns in each State.

4-H materials in foods and nutrition from a number of States have received careful consideration. Miss Fern Shipley and Miss Janina Czajkowski, both members of the national 4-H Foods and Nutrition Committee have aided me in going over the bulletins and material. We hope this is another step in the plan for evaluating and strengthening the 4-H foods and nutrition program.

Let's take a close look at our 4-H foods and nutrition projects and see how we can strength them. Here are some of the questions you might like to ask yourself about your own State's program and materials.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, Washington 25, D.C.

PLAN OF PROGRAM

1. Does your 4-H Food and Nutrition Program consider the age, interest, and ability of the girl?

Some of the States have their 4-H projects divided into junior and senior projects, which is a step in the right direction, because we know the interests of the girls at 10 and at 16 are different. Girls at 10 years of age are still developing by learning more simple skills. For example, they enjoy learning how to cook much as we enjoy learning new hobbies. As the girl gets older she is more interested in entertaining. She doesn't want to learn to bake cookies just for the sake of the cookies. She wants to use them in entertaining her friends or her family. In working out 4-H projects this change in interests needs to be recognized.

2. When your project progresses from Unit 1 to Unit 5, does it build each unit around the interests of members of that age as well as increase the difficulty of your subject matter?

If the 4-H projects do not meet the interests of the girls they tend to drop out. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that 33 percent of our 4-H girls have been in club work only one year, 23 percent two years, and 17 percent three years. The remaining 33 percent have been in four years or more. Fifty-five percent of the members are 9 to 12 years old.

The senior girls prepare foods which are more difficult from the standpoint of requiring more skill but are not always based on the interests of girls of that age. Are your projects based on the subject matter rather than on the interest of the girls that are participating? This is perhaps a hangover from more formalized curriculum instead of being based on our newer education concepts. Are your senior projects based on the interests of adolescent girls or do they assume that if the foods cooked are more difficult and the girls learn something new each year, they will be interested.

3. Does your 4-H foods project start with breakfast?

We all recognize the importance of a good breakfast and we know it is important for the 4-H members to have a good breakfast. However, starting the 4-H project with breakfast is not necessarily the best means of getting the girls to eat a good breakfast.

Starting out a 4-H project by having the girls prepare a breakfast meets with opposition from the mothers and the leaders, as well as the girls.

In interviewing a group of girls I found they wanted to learn to bake - not cook cereal. They were interested in making salads - not boiling eggs. The mothers said they did not want the girls in the kitchen when they were trying to get breakfast. The school busses left early and the girls did not have time to do anything in the mornings. The leaders and agents said the girls were not interested in breakfast.

In one State where breakfast had been the beginning project, at the request of the agents, and the enrollment was low, the specialists wrote a preproject geared to the interests of 10 year olds and the enrollment immediately picked up. In general, if the projects are based on a meal pattern, is it better to start the project with lunch or supper?

4. Do your projects include boys as well as girls?

Each year we have more boys taking foods projects. It is important that they too understand nutrition. More men are taking up cooking as a hobby. Is your project written so boys as well as girls could take it? Perhaps a unit in out of door cookery would help increase the enrollment of boys.

5. Is your project too technical?

Some of the 4-H projects are too technical and too difficult for this age group. The readability of 4-H projects has improved markedly in the past few years. Is the material itself still too technical? Do you for example try to teach about all of the vitamins?

6. Do you crowd too many things in the program?

This is a common failing in extension work. We try so hard to teach everything at one time about vitamins or meal planning. Sometimes the requirements we set up are difficult for the member to achieve.

7. Is your program planned to educate boys and girls or is it merely the basis for a contest?

A contest should be the follow-up of a project well done. We know a contest does help stimulate interest in 4-H. The girl who bakes hundreds of pies to enter a contest but does not change her food habits or improve the family meals may not be the girl most deserving of recognition. Let's have 4-H programs, not 4-H contests.

8. Does your program include help for the leaders?

Do you have a food and nutrition leader's manual or do you prepare guides that really help the leaders to help the 4-H'ers. Leaders say they need more help!

9. Is your record book simple enough for the members to use?

Some record books are far too detailed to interest the younger members so they are not kept successfully.

10. Does the member and leader know what is required for a project?

Most leaders prefer that the requirements for a project be definite and understandable but allow for elasticity. If they are put in the front of the bulletin, where you can see what is required for a given project, it is preferable.

11. Do the requirements give some leeway?

For example you can say, make muffins from the recipe on page 12 four times. Or you can say, a hot bread your family will enjoy for supper four times.

If you select muffins then you should be very sure it fits into the eating pattern of the families in your State. As the projects move from junior to senior the leeway should be greater.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR 4-H BULLETINS
AND SEE WHERE THEY CAN BE
IMPROVED

1. Is it printed in good readable type?

The type on recipes should be large enough to follow, without picking up the bulletin, when you are making the dish. The ingredients are usually in heavier type than the directions. The reading matter in the bulletin can be of smaller type than the recipe material. In some bulletins this is reversed.

2. Is the readability good?

Many of your bulletins have been tested for readability and it is much better than it was a few years back. However, there are still some who have difficulty putting technical material in simple language.

3. Do they have good illustrations?

An illustration should tell a story or be amusing. Photographs should be clear, tell a definite story and not have a confused background. The clothes worn by the girls will often date a bulletin. A good line drawing is much better than a poor picture.

4. Do your bulletins have a good layout?

The way the illustrations are arranged, the amount of white space, and how it is arranged all add to the usefulness and attractiveness of the bulletin.

5. What is the best size for a 4-H bulletin?

Many of the 4-H members like to put the bulletins in the regulation 4-H folders and record books. This calls for a bulletin 8 x 11 inches. Many State bulletins are appearing in this size.

6. Do your bulletins use color?

Color makes a bulletin more attractive. Sometimes colored ink or colored paper can add to your bulletin, with very little additional expense. Color in the cover, even though it isn't used inside the bulletin, makes the project look more interesting.

7. Is your bulletin well organized?

Have you an index and is it easy to follow? Is it well arranged? Are the requirements in the front where the member can find them?

8. Are you using modern ways of judging or do you still base your score card on 100 points?

Very few of us can judge whether color should be 15 or 20 points and this is not informative. However we can check descriptive points such as:

COLOR	Good	Acceptable	Poor
Bright	:	:	:
Uniform	:	:	:
Typical of tender, young	:	:	:
vegetables	:	:	:
	:	:	:

Many persons cannot tell the difference between good and poor flavor, and ideas on what is good or poor vary widely with individuals and food preferences in various sections of the country.

If a score card is used it is best to base it on some other type of scoring than 100 percent. Check sheets are often more satisfactory than score cards. A check sheet is easy to use that the judge can check the flavor as Good, Acceptable, Poor, or perhaps Excellent.

The question of weighing the score cards accurately is also very difficult. Should flavor have 30 points or 20 points? If you are stressing certain points you may want the judges to put more emphasis on these than on other points, and if so it is well to discuss this with the judges ahead.

It is well to remember that all judging calls for judgment. No scoring system will make up for a lack of judgment.

It is well to include a brief description of the desirable characteristics of a good product so the 4-H member has something on which to gauge her product.

Be sure the points you give are practical and have a meaning for the 4-H'er. For example, what does texture mean to a 10 year old? Can you describe the texture in simple understandable words so she knows what you mean by the texture of cookies. Are the standards you are setting so far from the ones the 10 year old can achieve that she doesn't know what you are talking about?

LET'S LOOK AT THE RECIPES AND MEALS YOU ARE
INCLUDING IN YOUR 4-H BULLETINS

1. Do they fit into the food pattern of the State?

If muffins are served in most of the homes in your State then the young 4-H'er will want to know how to make them but if biscuits or cornbread are commonly served perhaps breads should be included in your first year 4-H project.

2. Can the food be served in connection with the family meals?

It is important that the girl learn how to make foods that fit into the family's eating pattern. If she can serve the foods in connection with the family meals, she is more likely to get the support of her mother in her 4-H projects. Particularly with the younger member, if she can help her mother to prepare a meal rather than try to get the entire meal by herself, the 4-H project may meet with greater family approval.

3. Will the girl enjoy the food she is cooking?

Your projects will be much more popular if the foods are fun to make rather than merely being good for you.

4. Are the recipes written in steps?

It is much easier to follow steps in a recipe rather than a solid paragraph of printed material. This is true of recipes written for women as well as girls. The extra space is justified, even at the expense of using fewer recipes in the bulletin.

5. Is the recipe up to date?

It isn't necessary to use yeast that takes overnight to rise when we make rolls. We now have quick acting yeast and newer methods of making rolls. We have found shorter ways of making cakes that work very well. Look at the recipes and see if there is a simpler way to do them.

6. Is the recipe fairly foolproof?

It's really amazing how directions that seem perfectly clear to you are hazy to someone else. Also some recipes are so exacting that two more stirs or one minutes extra cooking will ruin them. These are not for the 4-H'er!

7. Is the order of your recipe correct?

Ingredients should be listed in the order they are used in the recipe.

8. Is the recipe suitable for the age girls that are to make it?

Complex cakes, pies, and yeast breads are difficult for the younger members. On the other hand older girls sometimes regard certain recipes as too childish for them.

Do you ask girls to beat mixtures that are beyond their physical abilities? Or do you ask the younger girls to make delicate types of cookies?

